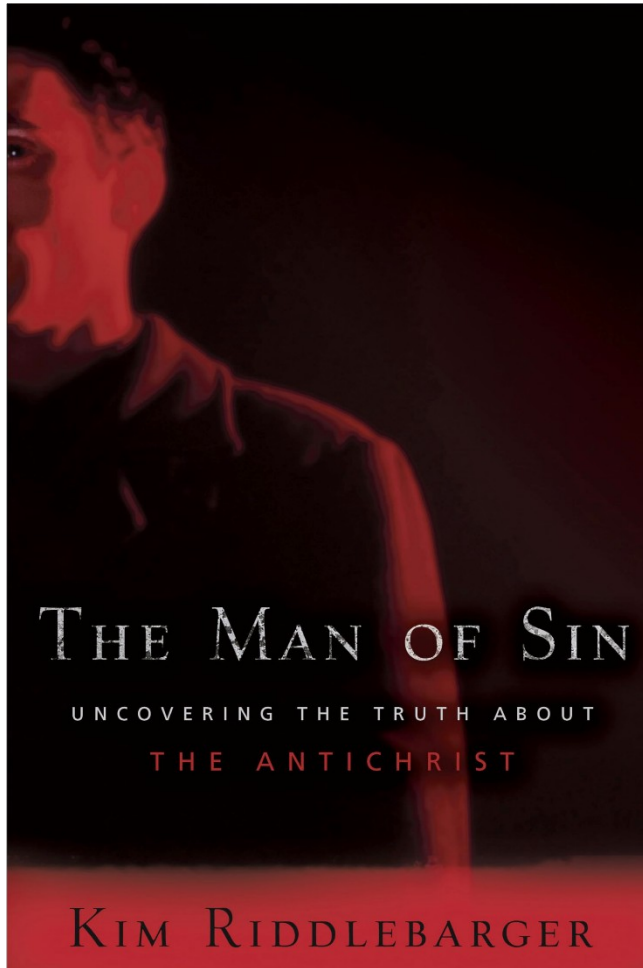


Who Or What Is the Antichrist? Cal State Fullerton Business Grad and Theologian Kim Riddlebarger '77 Takes a Look



Bible prophecy is a big topic in Christian circles today. But perhaps no aspect draws as much religious and secular interest as the identity and characteristics of the Antichrist.

If you are from the Christian subculture, you probably associate the Antichrist with the shadowy world figure predicted in the *Left Behind* novels or movies. The average secular American envisions the plots of Halloween horror flicks such as *The Omen*. Liberals in academia and religion are likely to argue that the Antichrist was a danger to the early church – hence the warnings in the New Testament – but that’s all past history now, with little relevance for our times.

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Riddlebarger '77, pastor emeritus of Christ Reformed Church in Anaheim, California, and one of the world’s leading theologians, argues in his book [*The Man of Sin: Uncovering the Truth About the Antichrist*](#) that the New Testament writers have in mind a particular future figure, but also speak of an ongoing danger internal and external to the church.

In this book, which is much shorter and a bit less technical than Riddlebarger’s more comprehensive [*A Case for Amillennialism*](#), Riddlebarger examines the various perspectives on the Antichrist, from the headline-driven futurist scenarios of dispensationalist Christians such as the late Tim LaHaye and Hal Lindsey to the Antichrist-as-a-myth arguments of liberal scholarship. He looks at how Christians throughout the centuries have approached the topic, from the Early Church fathers who were convinced that the Antichrist was an apostate Jew who would desecrate a rebuilt

Jerusalem Temple to Protestants (and even some Roman Catholics) fearful of papal authority and decadence in the 16th century to today's beliefs. And yes, expectation of the Antichrist isn't new. It's been part of Christian culture since the earliest times.

Finally, Riddlebarger argues from Scripture and from the Reformed theological tradition for a view consistent with Reformed Amillennialism: antichrist speaks of a series of false teachers who will attempt to lead Christians astray throughout the Church Age. Additionally, secular governments will at times overstep their God-given authority, leading to tyrannical dictatorships such as those of Hitler, Stalin and Mao. But at the end of history, these two trends will converge, resulting in an end-times personal Antichrist who will desecrate the church, persecute believers, and control the world economically and politically.

If you're looking for a thriller about the latest technologies that might be the Mark of the Beast or what little-known foreign leader might be the next Antichrist candidate, you'll be disappointed by Riddlebarger's scholarly work. But if you're looking for reasons to reject supposed Christian fanaticism about end times in favor of a secular worldview, you'll also be disappointed. Riddlebarger is committed to approaching the topic of Antichrist – and future things generally – from a thoroughly Biblical framework, the way serious Bible scholars have throughout the centuries.

One of the greatest surprises you'll discover from reading Riddlebarger's book is that the word "Antichrist" only appears a handful of times in Scripture. Those references are in the epistles of the Apostle John, which were written toward the close of the First Century. And they primarily deal with heretical teachers, not world dictators. But combined with an examination of the Apostle Paul's writings in II Thessalonians 2 and John's vision in Revelation 13-18, we are better able to connect these two seemingly separate threads into a more cohesive view.

According to Riddlebarger, past speculation that Caesar Nero, Emperor Domitian, Napoleon, Adolf Hitler or Saddam Hussein were the Antichrist weren't all that off base. They were forerunners, as were even Old Testament despots such as the pharaoh of the Exodus and Nebuchadnezzar. But one day, there will be a final fulfillment followed immediately by the return of Jesus Christ and the inauguration of eternity.

The Man of Sin is rooted in Riddlebarger's adherence to [amillennialism](#), the simplified and most common Christian interpretation of the future, but by no means the only theologically orthodox view. As such, a premillennialist or postmillennialist might disagree with some of Riddlebarger's viewpoints. Additionally, Riddlebarger comes unapologetically from the Reformed

confession, which differs theologically from other branches of Christianity such as Pentecostalism and Roman Catholicism.

Still, Christians, and even secular readers, from across the spectrum of worldviews and perspectives will gain much from Riddlebarger's book. A sensational topic is approached in a clear and level-headed manner. And rather than being thrilled, frightened or convinced to disbelieve, the reader comes away reminded of the importance to stand firm for faith and freedom, and to look forward to the ultimate consummation of history, the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

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